DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 858 UD 033 024

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TITLE Planning Guide for Community Discussion and Reflection Processes.

INSTITUTION Center for Assessment and Policy Development, Bala Cynwyd, PA.

SPONS AGENCY Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI.
PUB DATE 1998-05-00
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Welfare; *Discussion; Focus Groups; *Planning; Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Program Development; Program Implementation
IDENTIFIERS *Reflection Process; Study Circles

ABSTRACT

A new multi-year effort to promote the health, positive development, and well-being of children has been established in the midwest Great Lakes region. The working name of this project is the Kellogg Pre-Birth through Age Three initiative. The first phase focuses on cross-site participation in the development of an overall design. Phase 2 will involve site-specific planning and early implementation, and phase 3, scheduled for January 2000, will consist of full-scale and long-term implementation. Nine sites have been invited to join in this effort. This guide contains planning suggestions for phase 1 of the initiative, focusing on the community discussion and reflection process. Several types of discussion methods are described, and suggestions are given for implementing some of these approaches. Determining who should be responsible for coordinating community discussion and reflection processes is also explored. Four charts summarize details of some community discussion approaches: (1) study circles; (2) the National Issues Forum; (3) community convenings; and (4) focus groups. Questions to help guide planning are suggested. (SLD)

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CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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PLANNING GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION PROCESSES

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I. BACKGROUND

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) has embarked on a new, multi-year effort to promote the health, positive development and well-being of children, from pre-birth through age three, in the Midwest Great Lakes Region.

The working name is the Kellogg Pre-Birth through Age Three Initiative. It has three phases of activity. Phase I began on July 1, 1997 and will continue through August 1998.[1] It focuses on cross-site participation in development of an overall Initiative design. Phase II runs from September 1998 through December 1999. Communities in Phase II will carry out site-specific planning and early implementation tasks. Phase III — full scale and long-term implementation — would begin in January 2000 assuming conditions are met to continue.

Nine sites have been invited to join with WKKF to create the design for the long-term Initiative. The goal is to create jointly a framework that is feasible, culturally competent, and based on recent knowledge and experience. Sites will shape the design of this Initiative through collaborative work within a site, across sites and with WKKF and Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD). Phase I work will include joint conferences and smaller group work on particular design decisions (for example, ways to define "community" for purposes of this Initiative).

In addition, every site is expected to begin or continue a process of community discussion and reflection (sometimes called community dialogues). Community discussion and reflection are the subject of this planning guide.

Briefly, for purposes of this Initiative, a community discussion and reflection process brings a broad group of people together (usually in small groups that meet several times) to talk with each other about issues they care about and can influence - in this case, the development of children pre-birth through age three. These activities are a means for public deliberation - that is, a process which allows a diverse group carefully to think, discuss and reflect on issues related to the health, positive development and well-being of infants and toddlers. Discussion activities help identify where there is consensus or disagreement on critical issues; however, facilitating agreement within a discussion forum does not need to be the goal, and is not required for purposes of the Initiative.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, a foundation-sponsored anti-racism Initiative is helping different churches and different neighborhoods talk with each other about oppression, denial and institutional racism. The goal is to create enough common understanding about racism and its effects on the community to build multi-racial support for anti-racism work. Many different groups are meeting across the community. Each group has ten to fifteen participants, who will meet 6-7 times as they work their way through this difficult topic. As their conversation deepens over time, they will develop just enough personal trust to begin to get at what separates them on these issues as well as what draws them together. The planners and the participants will find their own knowledge of racism changed. Some will have comfortable assumptions challenged, some will begin to see that there may be more than one way to approach change, and all will have reflected on their own positions in light of how others see them. Some research shows that people can actually begin to change their beliefs and behaviors as a result of the awareness, discomfort and new ways of understanding what they experience.

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[1] *The W.K. Kellogg Foundation invited sites to participate in Phase I of the Initiative, in January, 1998.*

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I. Background (continued)

Anti-Racism Initiative (continued)

But because this is part of a bigger change process in Albuquerque, results from these discussions will also be used to further or refine the action agenda that the sponsoring agency has already developed. For example, the group is trying to reduce institutional racism by changing the composition of elected and appointed boards and commissions. Some of the discussion group participants may want to be nominated or nominate someone else to serve on a board or commission in order to bring new and more diverse voices into policy positions. But others will use the discussion initiative as a forum to develop new anti-racism strategies -- for example, by organizing within their own church or neighborhood to develop skilled anti-racism leaders among middle and high school age youth. In addition, the sponsors of the discussions will learn more about what racism is like in the community, exactly how it affects community citizens, what strategies might gain support and the kind of opposition that faces them. All of this information will be drawn from the group discussions and shared with the steering group that oversees the larger anti-racism Initiative. That group will use the information to refine ongoing strategies, create new ones to fill gaps, discontinue ones that are not likely to make any difference. Thus, the discussions will contribute directly to the community initiative, and may also create a ripple effect through actions that individuals and groups take on their own.

Our hope is that the community discussion and reflection processes that you create or continue around 0-3 issues will generate these kinds of benefits for your site, and the individuals in it.

These kinds of in-depth and ongoing discussions are at the heart of the democratic process. They can also stimulate change, spark action, help organize communities, share decision making and disseminate information. For example, community discussion and reflection processes have been used to:

- Help communities in Connecticut choose among different options to improve their public schools;
- increased awareness of institutional racism in Albuquerque; and
- Stimulated education reform in Kentucky.

However, regardless of the outcome, *we believe the process of effective, broad communication* on issues of interest is a benefit in and of itself to neighborhoods and communities.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

What is it?

Any process that brings different people together to talk seriously and in-depth about something of concern to them.

Why do it?

Under the right circumstances, community discussion and reflection initiatives or programs can help people change their attitudes and behaviors, and they can help a community organize and act to improve things.

What does a community discussion and reflection process look like?

There are a lot of different ways that communities have done this work. Several different approaches are described in this planning guide.

How do you know which approach to use?

Each approach is better at some things than others. For example, some approaches are better at challenging people's beliefs (leading to individual change), some are better at gathering information (so new voices get heard), some are especially good when you are trying to organize large numbers of people. You should choose the approach that seems like it would be best to do what you are trying to accomplish in your site.

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II. PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS

WHAT ARE THE GOALS FOR COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION?

The goals of these activities for this Initiative are to:

- Inform the overall design of the Initiative.

  A key feature of this Initiative is the collaborative design process. WKKF seeks to learn from participating sites in order to develop a framework that builds on their successes. Broad-based community discussions are one way in which this will happen.

- Facilitate broad-based communication in sites around issues related to infant health and development.

  These activities will focus on issues related to necessary services and supports for young children and their families. Dialogues are a great way for the citizenry to talk about child-rearing, positive child development, recent research on brain development and its implications, and to begin/continue to create a "buzz" in the community about improving outcomes for children, pre-birth through age three.

- Prepare for longer-term public will strategies.

  Public will, as we define it, includes strategies to change attitudes, mobilize the public to invest in children's issues, and modify the behaviors of people who make policy, run programs, or work directly with children (parents, care providers, etc.). As such, we hope information resulting from community discussions on these issues will help shape messages and strategies to build public will.

SUMMARY OF EXPECTATIONS

People from all walks of life and many different backgrounds should participate.

The process must include poor and isolated families; people who make policy decisions and work in public systems that affect children 0-3; and business people who influence work/family policies and daily lives of children.

People should talk about what matters to them about children 0-3.

People should have a chance to talk about new research about children 0-3.

Discussions should help sites understand what is needed to ensure that all children thrive.

Sites should document the discussions so they can share information that will help create the cross-site Initiative design.

The community discussion and reflection process should begin in Phase I, but can continue for as long as the site thinks is useful. The longer it continues, a larger number of people can be involved.

Some discussions must take place in time to provide information to share at a conference in late July (July 29-31).

Sites should plan to assess their community discussion and reflection process and its results to see that these expectations are met..

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WHAT ARE WKKF'S EXPECTATIONS OF SITE COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITIES?

Each site should engage key stakeholders in the planning of these activities to meet the needs of their site. However, at a minimum, these community dialogue processes should meet the following expectations:

Participation

- Site community discussion and reflection should involve a diverse group of parents, relatives, concerned citizens and other care givers. At a minimum, diversity along the lines of culture, race, socio-economic status, gender, age and household makeup is critical to ensure for a broad, quality public dialogue program.
- Specifically, sites should plan for the participation of:
  - voices that are not typically heard, and parents/families whose children are encountering the most difficult circumstances (i.e., those affected by the new work and responsibility laws, etc.);
  - persons with institutional or system responsibility for key health and development programs, including the development of communities and neighborhoods (i.e., child care providers, health care providers, CDCs, resident councils, etc.); and
  - representatives and the employees of business and industry within the site who are concerned about improving the lives of children, pre-birth through age three.
- Site dialogues should use both formal and informal processes and natural and created opportunities to ensure that all segments of the community can participate.

Content

- Community discussion and reflection should place emphasis on issues that are important to residents in each individual site. These activities should focus on what "matters" to participants relative to the healthy growth and development of children, pre-birth through age three.
- These activities should be used to discuss and reflect on the most current information concerning the health, positive development and well-being of children pre-birth through age three. Efforts should be made to do so in ways that are understandable to all participants.
- Materials should be used to focus and deepen discussions. Materials should help participants voice their own opinions and experiences and reflect on additional issues related to child-rearing and community support for children and families. Materials can include questions, "forced choice" scenarios and policy options, videos about child development and parenting, statements of different perspectives about why some children are thriving, different community "visions" and so on.
- Materials should be user friendly and culturally competent. We hope that sites will share their experiences with existing and newly developed resources with each other.
- Community discussion and reflection should seek to identify public opinion and thoughts on:
  - what has worked to facilitate the healthy growth and development of children pre-birth through age three in their communities;
  - what has not worked well in this area; and
  - what is needed to ensure that all children thrive, including children of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds.

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II. Purpose and Expectations (continued)

Sharing Information

- We expect sites will find the discussion and reflection process a rich source of information (as well as a process of benefit to the participants even if information is never shared beyond the sessions). We expect and encourage sites to use this information for their own planning purposes.
- For cross-site Initiative design purposes, we expect sites to glean and share with each other, WKKF and CAPD the following types of information from community discussion and reflection:
  - specific practices, strategies, supports or assets that parents and other caretakers use and believe are essential to fostering the well-being of their children 0-3;
  - why these particular practices, strategies, supports or assets matter;
  - conditions and circumstances under which children and families live in this site that foster or impede the health and positive development of children;
  - efforts children and families make to access needed supports and services;
  - perceptions of the usefulness and effectiveness of current policies, regulations, services and supports;
  - obstacles that impede a family's ability to foster a child's health and positive development in this site;
  - awareness and attitudes towards information about early brain development;
  - trusted organizations, institutions and individuals (current or potential leaders);
  - segments of the public that emerge – characteristics of groups with like attitudes, perceptions and/or behaviors;.
  - language that different segments of the public use to discuss issues of child rearing and community support for children and families; language or issues that are particularly sensitive or powerful; strongly held beliefs and areas of consensus that might be a basis for organizing or building coalitions; areas of difference that may help define segments of the public; areas of misinformation (for example, widely held but inaccurate beliefs about the status of different groups of children; availability of good quality infant and toddler care or the number of working parents of infants and toddlers) and other information to inform any marketing or public will efforts; and
  - if the same people meet several times, any changes that can be detected in their attitudes, perceptions or behaviors about the issues being discussed.

Evaluation

- Sites should assess their community discussion program to inform the process and understand its benefits. These activities should include early, mid-course and final assessments on key indicators such as participation, content, and the level of involvement of different sectors in the site.
- As noted above, sites are expected to share with WKKF and CAPD information/lessons learned resulting from the community discussion and reflection process that have implications for the Initiative design.

Timing and Duration

- Sites are expected to begin community discussion and reflection in Phase I. To ensure for broad, quality discussion activities, this process should continue beyond Phase I.
- Given the importance of community discussions to the overall design, sites should conduct these activities with diverse segments of the community prior to the next joint design conference (currently scheduled for July 1998). The actual number of community discussions to occur prior to this point should be determined by the site. However, it should be in accordance with best practices regarding appropriate group sizes for quality discourse and deliberation.

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III. IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION PROCESS

WHERE DO WE START?

Phase I support provides an opportunity to build on ongoing and or past related activities in this area. As such, site planning efforts for new and/or expanding community discussion and reflection activities may begin with consideration of the following:

- What have we done well in the area of facilitating broad community dialogues around the health and development of children pre-birth through age three?
- What have we learned from our past efforts?
- What is missing in our current efforts and/or capacity to facilitate such broad dialogue? Are there particular content areas and/or issues that have not been addressed? Are there particular segments of the community that have not been engaged?
- What assistance do we need to further build on our current efforts or capacity in this area?

Such analysis by coalitions sponsoring a community dialogue program may help direct Phase I resources in this area and serve to build on and strengthen existing efforts.

In addition to brainstorming on the above mentioned issues, a site must do some visioning on the goals and objectives of a community discussion and reflection process as well as how key stakeholders will be engaged. Issues to consider for start-up as identified in **Community Mobilization: Strategies to Support Young Children and Their Families** are illustrated in Exhibit 1.

EXHIBIT I

Getting started checklist

In order to assist in the organization, planning and coordination of your community discussion and reflection process several issues should be considered. The following is a checklist that may assist each site in coordinating its own community discussion and reflection process.

- What is the purpose of the community discussion and reflection process?
- Who should start a community discussion and reflection process?
- What are the goals of the community discussion and reflection process?
- How will you handle opposition?
- What information will stakeholders need when they are being asked to participate?
- What information will stakeholders need once they have decided to participate?
- What can be expected of community discussion and reflection process participants?
- How will you invite the broadest, most diverse participation for community discussion and reflection process?
- How will you organize, plan, and coordinate community discussion and reflection process?
- How will you assess and evaluate the community discussion and reflection process?

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WHAT ARE THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION PROCESS, OF THE KIND TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN PHASE I?

There are a variety of formal and informal methods that communities use to engage the public in dialogue on important issues. Methods that spark deep discussion and genuine reflection often share the following characteristics or components:

- Participation is voluntary;
- Participants are prepared: they have a general idea of what will be discussed, and what is expected from them (for example, participants have made a commitment to attend scheduled sessions). They know whether or not their names will be connected to anything they say, how information they give will be used and what sponsors hope to accomplish. They have had an opportunity to verify this information and have any questions answered by an organization or person they trust;
- Attention is paid to creating a "safe space" and conducive environment where participants feel relatively free to express their candid opinions;
- Discussion is facilitated or guided;
- Facilitators (moderators, discussion leaders) are trained and/or experienced in the issue and the dialogue method being used. They know how to foster interaction among group members, to guide the discussion in ways that do not bias the conversation, to handle silence, heated disagreement and a variety of individual and group behaviors;
- Specifically designed or selected materials are used to spark discussion and reflection. Often, these materials provide simple statements of different perspectives on an issue. Such materials reassure participants that they are not the only ones to hold a particular point of view. Further, they are a means to get discussion started about viewpoints that may be common in a site but not represented in the room (this is often true when groups are deliberately homogeneous by race, gender and/or role with respect to children in order to increase the "safety" of the discussion);
- Efforts are made to encourage dialogue among the participants (rather than between the discussion leader and individual participants). Everyone participates (special techniques are used to draw out every voice);
- In some approaches, participants continue to meet over time. Discussions often get deeper and richer as people become more comfortable challenging or probing each other's assertions and viewpoints. Discussions may also deepen as the materials provided surface new ideas or information; and
- Methods to capture unfiltered information are established (audio or video recording, multiple note takers, etc.).

WHAT METHODS EXIST FOR COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITIES?

There are a variety of methods or models for community discussions. Some of the better known formal methods are Study Circles (as defined by the Study Circle Research Center sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc.) and The National Issues Forum (as defined and sponsored by The Kettering Foundation). Other methods or opportunities that people use to foster community dialogue are through town meetings, focus groups, meetings of organizations (for example, tenant groups, Head Start parents, service sororities and fraternities, churches, mosques and synagogues), talking with people at natural gatherings of various community residents (for example, in laundromats, clinics and neighborhood gathering spots) and through natural ways that people in communities communicate with each other.

Discussion methods vary in the amount, intensity and duration of participant deliberation, often as a function of their overall purpose. Some ways in which methods differ include:

- Primary purpose - what they accomplish well or poorly;
- The number of participants;

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- Whether sessions include people who are similar or diverse (age, race, etc.);
- Whether sessions are conducted only once or repeatedly; and
- Methods used to stimulate discussion.

Sites should consider different strategies in light of how well each fits the particular needs and characteristics of their sites, as well as ongoing community forums or discussions. Sites may use a combination of strategies given the specific purpose of a communication session. A careful consideration of the benefits of each, in addition to ways in which various strategies may fit with ongoing efforts, will determine what is an appropriate fit.

Charts 1 through 4 of this planning guide describe some of the differences, advantages and disadvantages of various approaches. The chart is simply CAPD's opinion based on observation of, or experience with, each method. Sites are free to choose whichever approach(s) best meet their needs, consistent with the basic expectations outlined in Section II.

WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING A COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION PROCESS?

According to the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) a "study circle" or community discussion and reflection process may be organized by a broad ***coalition*** of members that includes a small central ***working group*** and a larger group of ***sponsors.*** The working group could be staffed by a coordinator. Together, sponsors and the working group recruit ***organizers*** - the people who coordinate individual community discussions. The ***facilitator*** is the person who guides a particular discussion and reflection session.[2]

Whether a site chooses a study circle-like strategy, a focus group or forum model, this type of organization may be applicable. The roles and responsibilities of these individuals are further defined in Exhibit 2.

Each of these players can take a larger or smaller role in implementing a community dialogue program. Again, SCRC offers the following options:

EXHIBIT II

Coordinating a Study Circle Program

Coalition: A diverse group of people and organizations committed to recruiting participants and supporting the program with in-kind assistance. The coalition is comprised of the working group and sponsors collectively and should be a microcosm of the community. The coalition may be an existing collaborative or a newly formed group for these purposes.

Working group: A smaller, close knit group of 5-15 people who are most actively involved in making the community discussion and reflection process happen. (Sometimes this group is referred to as the steering committee). The working group is a subgroup within the coalition. It includes community leaders who are committed to open community dialogue on the issues that concern young children, pre-birth through age three. This group should be comprised of people who approach the issue from different perspectives. In this way the group will be certain to have a broad base of support. It may be the case that working groups hold a community discussion and reflection process or study circle among themselves. This will provide those intimately involved with planning these activities an opportunity to experience the process first hand.

[2] This summary is taken from Planning Community-wide Study Circle Programs: A Step by Step Guide, Part 2 (Basic Steps in Creating a Community-Wide Program). This guide was distributed at the cross-site conference held in Detroit on January 29-30, 1998. A limited number of copies are available. For more information, please contact CAPD.

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EXHIBIT II (continued)

Sponsors: A group comprised of a wide variety of people and organizations. Sponsors should include individuals with:

- High visibility on the issue being discussed;
- Strong connections to grassroots; and
- Opposing sides of the issue that is being addressed.

Organizers: The people who coordinate individual community discussion and reflection sessions. Organizers often are representatives of community-based organizations; for example, the Executive Directors or other staff of a neighborhood agency may be asked to set up a discussion forum involving their clientele. Depending on how you organize your program, organizers may be responsible for everything from arranging locations to recruiting discussion leaders and participants.

Facilitator: The person who facilitates individual community discussion and reflection forums.

Coordinator: A highly organized person (sometimes 2-3 people) at the hub of the organizing effort who has the day- to- day responsibility for the discussion program and being the contact point for all players. Often, the coordinator reports to the working group. Graduate students, many of whom need to complete an internship or practicum, retired persons, or other volunteers are perfect individuals for the role of Coordinator.

- Option I: Working Group Takes the Lead
  - One suggestion is to have the working group do much of the work necessary to coordinate a community discussion and reflection process. Members of the working group would recruit participants, discussion leaders, organizers and other members who choose to be involved.
- Option II: Coordinator Assumes Primary Responsibility
  - Another strategy would be for the working group to have considerably less responsibility than in the option above. Here, the working group selects a coordinator who is responsible for recruiting sponsors and organizers.

    Organizers then recruit the various individuals (discussions leaders, other organizers, etc.) who will then setup meeting times and places. If your site decides to hire a person who will assume the responsibility to coordinate your community discussion and reflection process, the site grant funding you received can be used for this purpose.
- Option III: Pairing of Like Groups
  - This option is a combination of the above two. Here, once individual organizers have recruited groups of participants that may be affiliated with that specific institution, the working group then "pairs" various groups that have like interests or missions with each other. This provides opportunities for diverse individuals and groups to work together with the working group. It also divides the responsibility for coordinating a community discussion and reflection process among a number of different organizations and individuals.

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL LAYOUT OF A COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITY?

Community discussion and reflection processes should encourage individuals to determine what is most culturally and practically relevant for them and use it to reinforce or challenge their own behaviors with respect to children, families, neighborhoods, communities, institutions and systems. As a result, the community discussion and reflection process will probably look very different from site to site. The number of community discussions, the size, and the content may all vary. These variations will reflect the size, demographics and culture of each individual site. The National Issues Forum (NIF) publication, **For Convenors and Moderators: Organizing for Public Deliberation and Moderating a Forum/Study Circle** (page 8) and the Study Circle Resource Center publication, **The Study Circle Handbook: A Manual for Study Circle Leaders, Organizers and Participants**

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III. Implementing a Community Discussion and Reflection Process (continued)

(page 5) both provide a description of a typical layout of a community discussion and reflection process.

Sites have considerable experience in implementing events that seek to elicit public opinion on specific issues related to children and families. While each community's model may look different and will build on their current work, a typical discussion forum, regardless of type, may include the following (as suggested by NIF and SCRC):

- Introductions, so that participants benefit from meeting new residents and identifying leaders on children's issues;
- Setting the rules for the session;
- Connecting to the issues, where participants describe what is at stake for them;
- The identification of differing views on an issue, as a strategy to facilitate discussion;
- In-depth discussion on the issues, to identify what is of importance to participants, where there is consensus, disagreement, etc.;
- Summarizing the session by identifying common themes and issues. Examples of summarizing questions are in Exhibit 3;
- If possible, tell people what actions will come from the discussions; and
- If accurate, let people know that people who make policies that affect them will be part of the discussion.

HOW WILL WE REACH ALL SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY?

In order to ensure that representatives from all segments of a site have a chance to participate in a community discussion and reflection process, it is important to engage those who are most often involved and those who do not normally participate in these types of activities. These strategies should consider natural and created communication opportunities that exist in sites. Our experience suggests that often times inaccurate assumptions are made about people who do not participate in these types of activities on a regular basis ("they don't care...they don't want to be involved"). We have found that everyone has an interest and a desire to participate in improving their community and the lives of its residents, especially its children. Many times we have only to find a way of talking with each other that bridges the gap in communication to discover how much we all have to offer a community discussion and reflection process.

Below are tips on how to involve isolated or hard to reach segments of the community:

- Use trusted community organizations to sponsor community discussions;
- Hold discussion activities in accessible, safe environments where participants will feel welcomed;
- Use reputable leaders and staff, both formal and informal, to publicize, coordinate and facilitate discussion activities;

EXHIBIT III.

Summarizing a National Issues Forum

It is important to summarize each session. Here, emphasis should be placed on identifying common issues or concerns and how individual thoughts and opinions may have changed as a result of considering others' views. The National Issues Forums suggests questions like the following have been useful:

What did you like or not like about the discussion?

- How has your thinking about the issues changed?
- How has your thinking about other people's views changed?
- How do cultural and learning differences influence different views?
- What didn't we work through?
- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves and our community in this forum?

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III. Implementing a Community Discussion and Reflection Process (continued)

- Use materials that are "user-friendly" and are sensitive to the particular needs, conditions and issues facing diverse audiences;
- Provide assistance in facilitating participation in meetings, which may include transportation assistance, child care and incentives for participation;
- Meaningfully involve residents in the planning of these activities;
- Explore the use of various outreach strategies which include:
  - radio and other targeted media;
  - door-to door solicitations;
  - word of mouth/telephone chains;
  - flyers placed in strategic places (mail box, restrooms, telephones, restaurants);
  - resident councils;
  - political leaders (councilperson, committee person, ward leader);
  - schools and hospitals;
  - daycare, childcare and recreation centers;
  - faith-based organizations (churches, synagogues, mosques, temples);
  - banks;
  - movie theaters;
  - partnerships with business and industry (flyer with paycheck); and
  - social security, public assistance and unemployment offices.

HOW MIGHT WE ASSESS THE VALUE OF OUR COMMUNITY DISCUSSION PROCESS?

"Evaluation is to help projects become better than they were planned to be." (WKKF Evaluation Approach, May 1993.) It provides sites with early, mid-course and final assessment activities and documentation of major issues of consideration for design. Again, the National Issues Forum suggests the following assessment questions to understand the lessons, outcomes, benefits, strengths and shortfalls of a community discussion program:

- Were we successful in engaging broad, diverse segments of the community?
- Do residents of your site see the issues in a different way from experts or politicians? Do they have a shared definition of the problem? Do they agree on the causes? Do they see connections on other issues?
- Did your community discussion and reflection process change anything?
- How did people come out on the conflicts, contradictions, and trade-offs? What were they willing or not willing to do to solve the problem?
- Did any general sense of direction emerge? Was there a range of thoughts, feelings or opinions that were consistent with one another that had community support?
- What unique information came out of the community discussion and reflection processes, that we should be aware of or pay attention to? What implications do the results have for your particular site? For other sites? For the overall initiative?

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IV. CHARTS

CHART 1. STUDY CIRCLES

USUAL PURPOSE	To create informed citizens who have explored many different facets of an issue from many different perspectives.
TYPICAL SCENARIO	Study circles are generally aimed at the individual growth of participants. They are popular among groups that feel that dialogue itself is one strategy for social change. The same participants attend several sessions, often sponsored and organized by a community coalition. They use specific materials as a jumping off point for discussion. The goal is individual reflection on the issue under discussion rather than group consensus or recommendations. Participants benefit directly from their participation in terms of inner growth, if it occurs.
PARTICIPATIONS PER SESSION	5-15 per session. Groups often include participants from two different churches, schools or neighborhoods to promote dialogue among people who may have different life experiences and hold different views.
NUMBER OF SESSIONS	Study Circles are often done in series of 4-5 sessions attended by the same participants. The method relies on multiple sessions to allow time for trust to develop and reflection between sessions. These tend to deepen the discussion over time.
MANUALS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE	Yes. Materials include manuals on organizing and conducting study circles, training guides for facilitators, sample materials. TA also available. SCRC provides assistance to communities to implement a large scale formal study circles approach (200 people or more). They provide on-site assistance and phone consultation. For more information contact Matt Leighninger, at SCRC who is familiar with the WKKF Pre-Birth through Age Three Initiative (860- 928-2616). Assistance may be free depending upon your needs.

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IV. Charts (continued)

CHART 2. NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM

USUAL PURPOSE	To help set policy directions for a community by having citizens consider trade-offs among possible choices; to create an agenda from choices surfaced National Issues Forums are often used as a tool to organize a community around an issue.
TYPICAL SCENARIO	Participants from around a community are invited to a discussion session. In the sessions, participants discuss different ways of responding to community problems. A second round of sessions is held with the same or different people to comment on an agenda built from choices preferred by the community. Participants often receive reports showing the outcome of their deliberations.
PARTICIPATIONS PER SESSION	Work can be done either in large or small groups. Small groups are generally 5-20 people.
NUMBER OF SESSIONS	The same group meets one or more times as necessary to create a working consensus on the issue under discussion.
MANUALS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE	Yes. Materials include manuals on organizing and conducting forums, training guides for facilitators, sample materials.

MINNESOTA
Minnesota Humanities Commission
Mark Gleason
987 E. Ivy Ave
St. Paul, MN 55106
612-774-0105; ext. 103
Next training: June 18-20, 1998

OHIO
Kent State University
Marilyn Bokrass
PO Box 5190
Kent, OH 44242-0001
330-672-7947
Next training: June 11-13, 1998

MICHIGAN
Beth Moore
Michigan State University
317 Natural Resources Bldg.
E. Lansing, MI 48824-1222
517-353-9694

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IV. Charts (continued)

CHART 3. COMMUNITY CONVENINGS (TOWN MEETINGS, FORUMS)

USUAL PURPOSE	To share information about pending actions, to gather citizen input, to stimulate citizen advocacy or action. These convenings are often used to allow political leaders and policymakers to hear directly from their constituencies on matters under consideration.
TYPICAL SCENARIO	Community leaders present information in a series of open or invitational meetings. Participants address comments and questions to the presenters. Sometimes, a larger group breaks out into smaller groups to discuss and reflect on the information presented. Participants usually are not notified personally about the results of the meeting or how their input is used; though it may be obvious in subsequent public action or inaction.
PARTICIPATIONS PER SESSION	As many as choose to attend. Town meetings can include several hundred people.
NUMBER OF SESSIONS	As many as desired. There may be a core group of people who participate in multiple town meetings, depending on their attachment to the issues being disucussed.
MANUALS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE	

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IV. Charts (continued)

CHART 4. FOCUS GROUPS

USUAL PURPOSE	To gather in-depth information about attitudes, perceptions and behaviors Focus groups are often used to give those planning an effort first-hand and unfiltered insight into the concerns, reality and preferences of the intended beneficiaries or implementers of an action. They are also a typical method for understanding consumer language and developing insights on which to base advertising, marketing and public will campaigns.
TYPICAL SCENARIO	Participants are invited to come to a one to two hour session to provide their opinions about a topic under discussion. A moderator, working from a topic guide, helps the group express its views and provide the data being sought. Sometimes participants are paid for their participation. Focus group participants usually do not benefit directly from participation, unless they are paid. They often do not learn the impact or result of their input.
PARTICIPATIONS PER SESSION	Typically 8-10 people. Experienced focus group organizers often invite 12 people to yield 8-10.
NUMBER OF SESSIONS	People usually participate in a single focus group on a particular issue.
MANUALS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE	There are books available that describe focus group techniques and how they are used in various kinds of sectors (social policy research, marketing and advertising research). Many cities and larger communities have professional focus group facilities and moderators who might be willing to help organize or do focus group sessions, sometimes pro bono. Universities and large corporations also sometimes have focus group organizers, moderators and facilities that they can make available for community efforts.

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V. QUESTIONS TO HELP GUIDE PLANNING

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE PLANNING/IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITY

What have we already done and what have we learned from that?

- What have we done well in the area of facilitating broad community dialogues around the health and development of children pre-birth through age three?
  - specifically, what has been done to include various segments of the community in these activities, including hard-to-reach communities?
- What have we learned from our past efforts?
- What is missing in our current efforts and/or capacity to facilitate such broad dialogue?
  - are there particular content areas and/or issues that have not been addressed?
  - are there particular segments of the community that have not been engaged?
- What assistance do we need to build on our current efforts or capacity in this area?

Why are we doing this?

- Given what has been implemented to date, what are the goals of our expanded community discussion program that take into account WKKF's expectations in this area?
- How important is it for us to use this process to:
  - learn new information?
  - disseminate recent information?
  - engage people differently in planning or making policy choices?
  - begin to lay the groundwork to change attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of people who care for children? Who set policies for children? Who decide how money is spent for children?
  - create a "buzz" in the community about the well-being of infants and toddlers?
  - gather insights and language, and identify segments to develop messages and public will strategies?
- How will we assess and evaluate the community discussion and reflection process?

What are some key design decisions?

- How can we build the broadest possible support for this effort?
  - who might serve as sponsors of such an effort?
  - how can we assemble sponsors that provide access to different sectors of the community?
  - what sponsors may be able to provide in-kind support to this process?
- What methods may be a good fit for our site (study-circle like strategies; focus groups, large group forums)?
- What funding and other resources are needed and available?
- What are our short and long-term plans for implementation regarding the use of different strategies?
- How will we organize the planning of this effort?
  - will there be a working group/team responsible for planning? If so, who might participate in this?
  - is there a coordinator who will take on the day-to-day responsibility for this effort? If so, who might that be and where will this person be housed?

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V. Questions to Help Guide Planning (continued)

What do we do to start implementing?

- How should we focus early efforts (before the July conference)?
  - do we start in certain sections of the city? Where and why?
  - are there key stakeholders whom we want to involve from the beginning?
  - are there gaps in what we know where unfiltered information would be especially helpful?
- What natural opportunities exist that we can build on to facilitate dialogue sessions?
- What information will stakeholders need when they are being asked to participate?
  - what information will sponsors need?
  - what information will participants of discussion groups need?
- What materials will we need to facilitate community discussions and reflections?
  - do we have access to these materials?
  - will materials need to be piloted in anyway?
- How will we compile learnings from this process to inform the design?
  - who will record sessions/document issues raised?
  - how will these learnings be shared ?

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VI. QUESTIONS TO HELP GUIDE EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Participation

- Did our community discussion and reflection activity involve a diverse group of participants? Did our process include:
  - voices that are not typically heard?
  - parents/families whose children are encountering the most difficult circumstances?
  - persons with institutional/system responsibility for key health and development programs?
  - representatives from business/industry?
- If so, what worked well to include participants? If not, what barriers existed?

Content

- What were the major issues that mattered most to participants about children, pre-birth through age three?
- What issues were raised about the recent research concerning the health, positive development and well-being of children? Do residents understand this new information?
- What were the major issues/opinions related to child-rearing and community support for children and families?
- What are participants' thoughts on:
  - what has worked to facilitate the healthy growth and development of children, pre-birth through age three?
  - what has not worked well in this area?
  - what is needed to ensure that all children thrive, including children of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds?

Sharing Information

- What kinds of information were shared among participants during community discussion and reflection processes?
- How do you plan to use this information to improve the lives of children, pre-birth through age three in your site? Did you collect any information that would be of benefit to the other sites? To the overall Initiative?

Evaluation

- What lessons did we learn about improving outcomes for all children, fostering community/foundation partnerships?
- What lessons did we learn about improving outcomes for all children, expanding current agenda for children, pre-birth through age three, community-driven efforts, community reflection and discussion processes?

Timing and Duration

- How many community discussion and reflections occurred prior to July 1998?
- How many participants attended these activities?
- What are your thoughts on continuing community discussion and reflections?

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VII. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION PROCESSES RESOURCES

The following list of resource materials may provide sites with assistance in implementing a community discussion and reflection process. It is important to note that WKKF and CAPD do not endorse any particular tool listed. Resources include books, manuals, articles, videos and world-wide web sites related to: community discussion and reflection processes; the health and development of children pre-birth through age three; community planning processes; and broader public will strategies.

We expect to annotate this resource list with the comments, suggestions and experiences of the sites as a method for increasing the amount of resources and information available to the WKKF Pre-Birth through Age Three Initiative.

The following lists the minimum requirements to access the web sites listed on this page:

- IBM PC (compatible) with 486 processor (or better)
- Corel WordPerfect Seven (or better)-OR-Microsoft Word 97 (or better)
- Internet access with a web browser (Netscape or Microsoft Explorer is recommended.)

A 3 fi floppy disk is enclosed that has copies of this community discussion and reflection process planning guide in both versions of the software mentioned above. The resource section listing world-wide web sites has been created so that a user can hyperlink with any of the web sites listed.

To use:

- Check with your computer information systems specialist to see if your computer is linked to an Internet access provider;
- Confirm your PC meets the minimum requirements listed above;
- Connect to the Internet;
- Click on any of the hyperlinks to the world-wide web sites in the resource materials section.

Community Discussion and Reflection Processes

Community Conversations About Connecticut's Public Schools: Planning Guide. William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, Connecticut League of Women Voters, Institute for Educational Leadership, Public Agenda.

*For Convenors and Moderators: Organizing for Public Deliberation and Moderating a Forum/Study Circle*National Issues Forums Research. Dayton, Ohio.

Planning Community Wide Study-Circle Programs: A Step-by-Step Guide. Study Circles Resource Center: Promfret, CT.

Public Conversations. Public Agenda's Public Engagement Programs. Public Agenda. New York

*Study Circle Handbook: A Manual for Study Circle Discussion Leaders, Organizers, and Participants.*The Study Circle Resource Center. Promfret, CT

Goldman, Alfred and Schwartz-McDonald, Susan. (1987.) *The Group Depth Interview: Principles and Practice*Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Toward a More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity: A Guide for Building Stronger Communities Through Public Dialogue. Study Circles Resource Center. Promfret, CT.

*Youth Issues, Youth Voices: A Guide for Engaging Youth and Adults in Public Dialogue and Problem-Solving*Study Circles Resource Center. Promfret, CT.

Pre-Birth through Age Three

Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. (1994.) Starting points: Meeting the needs of our youngest children. New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Kotulak, Ronald. (1996.) *Inside the Brain.*Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel.

Ramey, Craig *Re-Thinking the Brain:*New Insights into Early Development. Families and Work Institute. New York.

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VII. Additional Resources (continued)

Ten Tips for Raising Happier, Healthier Children: I Am Your Child. Families and Work Institute. Fact Sheet. The Reiner Foundation. New York

The First Years Last Forever: I Am Your Child. Video. CD ROM. (English and Spanish language versions). Families and Work Institute. The Reiner Foundation. New York.

*The First Years Last Forever: I Am Your Child - The New Brain Research and Your Child's Healthy Development*Pamphlet. (English and Spanish language versions). Families and Work Institute.The Reiner Foundation. New York.

Community Planning for Children and Families

Community Intervention Project: MORE for Infants and Families. GOAL ONE Project. National Association for Educating Young Children, Washington, DC.

Dombro, Amy Laura, O'Donnell, Nina Sazer, Galinsky, Ellen, Melcher, Sarah Gilkeson and Farber, Abby. (1996.) Community Mobilization: *Strategies to Support Young Children and Their Families.*Families and Work Institute: New York.

Melaville, Atelia I., Blank, Martin J., Asayesh, Gelareh. (1993.) *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services.*U.S. Department of Education: Washington, DC

*The First Years Last Forever: I Am Your Child - Community Mobilization: What Communities Can Do To Help Promote Children's Healthy Development.*Families and Work Institute. The Reiner Foundation. New York.

Broader Public Will Strategies

*Communications as Engagement: A Communications Strategy for Revitalization.*The Rockefeller Foundation and Millennium Communications Group.

Leiderman, Sally, Wolf, Wendy C., and York, Peter. *Some Thoughts About Public Will*Center for Assessment and Policy Development. Bala Cynwyd, PA.

Matthews, David and McAfee, Noelle. *Community Politics.* The Kettering Foundation. Washington, DC.

World Wide Web Sites

*Communications as Engagement: A Communications Strategy for Revitalization.*The Rockefeller Foundation and Millennium Communications Group.

http://www.cdinet.com/Mill/Report/report.html

Families and Work Institute.

http://www.familiesandwork.org

*I Am Your Child.*The Reiner Foundation.

http://www.iamyourchild.org

National Issues Forums.

http://www.nifi.org

National Association for Educating Young Children. Washington, DC.

http://www.naeyc.org/default.htm

National Association for Educating Young Children Early Childhood Resources Catalog. Washington, DC.

http://www.naeyc.org/catalog/catalog_index.htm

(To view the NAEYC Early Childhood Resources Catalog you must first download and install the Adobe Acrobat Reader.)Public Agenda.

http://www.publicagenda.org

*The Study Circle Handbook: A Manual for Study Circle Discussion Leaders, Organizers, and Participants.*The Study Circle Resource Center. Promfret, CT.

http://civic.net/ACF/SCRC.html.

*Toward a More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity: Basic Steps in Creating Community-wide Dialogue*Study Circles Resource Center. Promfret, CT.

http://www.pbs.org.ampu/comdia.html

*Youth Issues, Youth Voices: A Guide for Engaging Youth and Adults in Public Dialogue and Problem*Solving. Study Circles Resource Center. Promfret, CT.

http://www.nald.ca/clr/study/develop1.htm.

Zero To Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. Washington, DC

http://www.zerotothree.org

Civic Practices Websites

http://www.cpn.org

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